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John Arden, Board of Editors

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Hong Kong
September 24, 1985

Precisely 40 years earlier than the date on this letter, Vietnamese workers in Saigon, responding to brutal attacks on Vietnamese politicians in the capital's city hall by French paratroopers and Foreign Legionnaires, launched a general strike against the colonial administration. "If any one day marks the start of the Indochina war, it might be that day," wrote Stanley Karnow in his recent, definitive Vietnam: A History. "For the strike and its aftermath initiated a momentum of conflict that, despite periodic negotiating attempts, could not be stopped."

An unstoppable war....Those who observe Southeast Asia, who fight or do business in the region, or simply live here and take a close interest in the neighbourhood's events could be forgiven for feeling that this is indeed the correct term. Forty years after the events of which Karnow spoke, the conflict which the September 24, 1945 general strike launched is still very much with us.

A Vietnamese army of occupation, bivouacked in Cambodia, continues the fighting against three guerilla armies spawned in the tumult of the past four decades. In Laos and in Vietnam itself, clandestine anticommunist forces still struggle against Hanoi's hegemony. Meantime, the Soviet Union is engaged in replacing the United States as Indochina's dominant superpower. Not since 1975 has the action been as intense. And never before has accurate news of developments been as difficult to obtain.

Shield Asia's Indochina Intelligence Report is designed to fill this very serious information gap. Intended primarily for senior diplomats, defence/intelligence attaches and recognized Indochina specialists,* the Report's unmatched sources provide by far the most authoritative monthly account of Indochina's increasingly complex military and diplomatic interplay.

Especially revealing is the regular department, **Camranh Watch** — for many subscribers, worth alone the cost of a year's reading. Here, the Indochina Intelligence Report's Board of Editors will chronicle the growth of perhaps Southeast Asia's single most disturbing phenomenon of recent years: the largest Soviet naval forward deployment base outside the Warsaw Pact. Camranh's month-by-month order of battle; the capability of all its forces and installations; the backgrounds of senior officers; the activities in and around the base and Camranh-based reconnaissance, electronic surveillance and training flights and patrols throughout the Western Pacific will be **Camranh Watch's** monthly staple.

It has been suggested to the IIR Board of Editors that you are a person likely to be interested in the **Report** and its ambitions. We are enclosing, therefore, a copy of the first issue. If you would like to see more of this new publication, which duplicates nothing now available in open sources on the subject of Indochina, I direct your attention to the coupon printed on the back cover. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

John Arden
for the Board of Editors

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INDOCHINA INTELLIGENCE REPORT
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Indochina Intelligence Report: A statement of principles

Shield Asia's charter contains the following passage:

Our region's politics and economics and its diplomatic and military affairs grow daily more complex. Only at his peril may the senior government officer or manager depend solely on overt sources — newspapers, newsmagazines, professional or trade journals or news services or "intelligence reports" which depend largely on such material. The prudent executive also recognizes that the authoritarian or totalitarian nature of many of our region's governments often make it impossible for traditional news sources to publish the most vital information....

Indochina Intelligence Report is the first of many **Shield Asia** reports designed to fill serious gaps in the region's information networks. That current events in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were chosen for this opening service is no accident. As a test of intelligence sources, Indochina presents what are, at the moment, Asia's most formidable obstacles to the gathering, collation and evaluation of authoritative information.

The **Indochina Intelligence Report's** principal product will be facts — checked and re-checked with relevant, mainly covert, sources available to **Shield Asia** in most Asian nations. As often as possible, we will let the facts speak for themselves. In passages of comment, we will acknowledge only one regional bias: a belief in the survival of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations free of pressures from either of the two superpowers or China. Such support for the ASEAN idea, however, will not be permitted to prevail over the objective reporting of any diplomatic, political, economic or military situation.

The Board of Editors
Shield Asia

Over the past 12 months, the general military situation in Indochina has been subject to rapid change. The main cause of this shakeup: a long-postponed major assault by Vietnam against static positions held on Cambodian territory (i.e., along the Thailand-Cambodia border) by the tripartite Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) forces. This issue of Indochina Intelligence Report addresses questions arising from the battlefield:

- What is the current balance of forces in Vietnam and Cambodia?
- What have been Vietnam's recent battlefield and diplomatic intentions?
- To what extent have the Vietnamese succeeded?
- In what manner are the (CGDK) partners and their Chinese ally responding? How successful have these responses been and how likely to be?

II Report #1-9/85: The battlefield numbers

Imprecise, poorly sourced press accounts and pressures on propagandists continue to distort military reports from both the China-Vietnam border and Cambodia. Here, based on the latest surveillance, are the accurate battlefield numbers:

VIETNAM: Current total military strength

Army	— 1,260,000
Navy	— 12,000
Air Force	— 15,000
Militia/paramilitary	— 6,900,000

Current People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) deployment

North Vietnam	65 divisions (7 divisions based on China-Vietnam border)
Central & South Vietnam	20 divisions
Cambodia	13 divisions (SEE BELOW)
Laos	5 divisions

CHINA (Vietnam-Laos border only): Army strength/deployment

Yunnan military region	— 2 Armies (11 and 14, total strength: 226,000)
Guangxi military region	— 3 Armies (41,42 and 45, total strength: 400,000)

CAMBODIA: Army strengths/deployment

PAVN	— 13 divisions, plus ancillary support units and PAVN military advisory units with Heng Samrin forces (total strength: 170,000 to 185,000)
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Most of these PAVN troops — some 9 divisions — are located along the Thai-Cambodian border or in positions further to the rear from which border reinforcement can rapidly take place.

Heng Samrin forces	— 10,000 — 12,000 main force plus a military-style Local Force of 20,000-plus
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There are four Heng Samrin divisions based along the Thailand-Cambodia border. Another division is based north of the capital, Phnom Penh, and a fifth along the southwestern coast.

Democratic Kampuchea (DK)	— 13-15 divisions (total strength: 45,000)
Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF)	— 7-8 "Groups" (total: 15,000)
Armee Nationale Sihanoukiste (ANS)	— 5 "Divisions" (total: 7,000)

II Report #2-9/85: Continuing China-Vietnam tension

The above figures indicate that 70 per cent of PAVN strength is located in Vietnam's north for the purpose of confronting PLA border pressures. The Beijing authorities maintain their large border presence not to counter any major threat of Vietnamese incursion into Chinese territory but for the following military and political purposes:

1. The need to respond to Vietnam's continued presence in Cambodia, thereby helping ASEAN, especially Thailand, to maintain security from PAVN invasion.
2. To help ASEAN and those non-Communist nations allied or friendly to ASEAN to put pressure on the Vietnamese to withdraw their forces from Cambodian territory and negotiate an internationally acceptable settlement on Cambodia's future.
3. To reassure the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) of Beijing's continued support to the CGDK in the coalition's struggle against Vietnamese hegemony.
4. To send a firm diplomatic signal to the Soviet Union that Beijing considers China's security concerns in Southeast Asia greatly outweigh improved Sino-Soviet relations, and that any improvement in the latter can come only after evidence of genuine Soviet pressure on Hanoi to withdraw its troops from Cambodia and reach a negotiated settlement.

Chinese Bombardments. In order to maintain this constant pressure on the Vietnamese, the PLA for the past three years has been carrying out a major artillery bombardment of Vietnamese territory. During this period, PLA units are known to have fired more than 500,000 shells — the world's heaviest sustained barrage of recent times. One example of its fierceness: last February alone, some 23,000 PLA shells landed in Vietnam's northern province of Ha Tuyen; in March, 20,000 shells. The Chinese purpose: an attempt to weaken Vietnamese logistic capability in Cambodia, where PAVN units were engaged in a series of heavy attacks on Cambodian non-Communist resistance forces based along the Thailand-Cambodia border.

Conclusion. ASEAN nations are united in their view that PAVN strength and pugnacity pose a serious threat to the security of Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Indonesia, for historical and internal political reasons, however, continues to regard China as a more serious threat to its territorial integrity than Vietnam. While continued debate will take place in ASEAN in an attempt to create a more unified stance on the Vietnamese threat, a solution to the Cambodian problem is not expected in the near future.

Meanwhile, there is also little likelihood of any easing of the tension on the China-Vietnam border. Indeed, the coming 1985/86 dry season in Cambodia will bring increased military conflict between the PAVN and CGDK forces and an accompanying increase in PAVN-PLA artillery exchanges. If the level of PAVN success against CGDK resistance forces in Cambodia is sufficiently high, or if the PAVN undertake a major incursion into Thai territory, there is no doubt that Beijing's immediate response will be to cross into Vietnam's northern provinces in strength.

II Report #3-9/85: Morale of Cambodia-based forces

PAVN Morale. In general, morale within PAVN units inside Cambodia is reported by PAVN defectors and POWs captured inside Thailand to be a serious problem. This is especially true of units whose main recruiting base has been the former South Vietnam. Reasons:

- Poor living conditions, including inadequate rations, medical facilities, strict discipline and severe punishments for minor infringements of discipline.
- Length of the struggle to subdue the Cambodian resistance and the lack of a positive military victory over CGDK forces.
- The Cambodian population's increasing enmity over the Vietnamese forces' continued presence.

Heng Samrin Forces' Morale. Morale among the Heng Samrin forces is low for the following reasons:

- Enmity towards the PAVN, who control all facets of the Khmer troops' military and political activity.
- The civilian population's enmity towards the Heng Samrin forces.
- Poor living conditions compared with PAVN troops'.
- Constant defections to the non-Communist resistance forces and desertions to the refugee communities along the Thailand-Cambodia border.
- Low quality of leadership, training and equipment.
- High casualties suffered in assaults on non-Communist resistance bases during the 1984/85 dry season offensive.

CGDK Forces' Morale. PAVN/Heng Samrin forces' successes during the 1984/85 dry season offensive did not significantly affect CGDK forces' morale. Indeed, paradoxically, the PAVN/Heng Samrin assaults forced a separation of the non-Communist resistance from its civilian population bases along the border with Thailand. The general view is that this has heightened morale by focussing resistance attention on the war and not on petty politics and the previous pervasive warlord mentality. An increased success rate against PAVN/Heng Samrin camps and troop movements has resulted, giving the non-Communist resistance much-needed experience and a boost to morale in recent months.

II Report #4-9/85: Inside the PAVN 1984/85 Offensive

Hanoi's General Aims: The Vietnamese intended the 1984/85 dry season offensive to portray to the world — especially any country considering a change in its support for a United Nations General Assembly seat for the CGDK — that there was growing military stability inside Cambodia. As a result of this military stability, Hanoi propagandists argued, economic and social stability would follow, thus ensuring a continuation of Vietnam's much-publicized "phased military withdrawal" from Cambodia. Hanoi appeared to be fully aware that the severity of its attacks on what were mainly civilian refugee concentrations along the Thailand-Cambodia border would create unfavourable press and ensuing international censure. However, the Vietnamese assured themselves that the short-term international focus on their army's activities and presence in Cambodia would be vastly outweighed by the offensive's long-term advantages.

Political Advantages. In undertaking the offensive, Hanoi's leadership gave high priority to the following political advantages:

- **Demonstrate** to the world Vietnam's domination of the resistance.
- **Discourage** further military and political support from ASEAN for the non-Communist resistance.
- **Destroy** the non-Communist resistance (for many, the only acceptable part of the CGDK), thereby isolating the Democratic Kampuchea (a.k.a. Khmer Rouge).
- **Weaken in the international arena** ASEAN's case that the CGDK is the only legitimate representative of the Cambodian people.

PAVN Military Objectives. It is now known that Hanoi formulated the 1984/85 offensive with the following objectives in mind:

- **Eliminate** the CGDK border bases in order to disrupt resupply operations.
- **Destroy** the CGDK's physical infrastructure.
- **Seal** the Thailand-Cambodia border, thus preventing supply and reinforcement from outside.
- **Secure** the Forward Area and facilitate control of the border for future operations.
- **Test** the military preparedness of the Royal Thai Armed Forces and the unity of Thai Prime Minister, General Prem Tinsulanonda's coalition government.

SPECIAL REPORT: Insider's account of Operation K-5

The best human intelligence source on the 1984/85 dry season offensive was a PAVN major who took advantage of the fighting to defect to the Royal Thai Government. The following, based on his interrogation, is a detailed summary of Operation K-5, the PAVN codename for the offensive:

►1. PHASES:

PHASE 1

Mission: To launch an all-out military offensive against CGDK forces from the end of 1984.

Objective: To destroy or seriously limit the scope of activity from all CGDK bases along the Thailand-Cambodia frontier, in preparation for PHASE 2.

PHASE 2

Mission: To launch a follow-up offensive against all remaining CGDK troop concentrations from the beginning of 1985.

Objective: To destroy all remaining CGDK forces or push the survivors into Thailand.

PHASE 3

Mission: To carry out mop-up operations against any remaining CGDK units inside Cambodia.

Objective: To eradicate all armed resistance throughout Cambodia.

PHASE 4

Mission: To restore internal security inside the country.

Objective: To strengthen and develop the infrastructure of the Heng Samrin government and its armed forces.

► 2. TIMINGS:

- PHASES 1 and 2 took place between November 1984 and June 1985.
- PHASES 3 and 4 are still under way.

► 3. RESULTS OF OPERATION K-5:

The PAVN/Heng Samrin forces began with a series of major assaults on the KPNLF and ANS bases along the Thailand-Cambodia border, and then switched attention to the DK bases, while continuing to harass non-Communist resistance supply routes. By June 1985, the following had been achieved:

- All CGDK strongholds inside Cambodia had been destroyed.
- 250,000 Cambodian civilian refugees had been pushed across the border into Thailand.
- Several major border incursions into Thai territory to disrupt supply routes had been successfully executed.
- A major programme was initiated to erect a security fence and lay extensive anti-personnel minefields the whole length of the Thailand-Cambodia border to prevent ease of cross-border operations into Cambodia by CGDK forces.
- Detailed intelligence reconnaissance of Royal Thai Armed Forces positions had been carried out.

► 4. EFFECT OF OPERATION K-5 ON CGDK:

- **Military casualties** among the non-Communist resistance were low, as a consequence of successful evacuation plans.
- **Supplies** of food and ammunition to resistance units have been maintained.
- **Morale** among the KPNLF and ANS is higher than before the offensive.
- The **warlord mentality** of many of the non-Communist resistance leaders, particularly among the KPNLF, has been removed, and the lesson well learned that the maintenance of large and vulnerable camps jointly located with the civilian population is futile.

► 5. CURRENT MILITARY STRATEGY, NON-COMMUNIST RESISTANCE:

- **Abandon** all intention of trying to set up further **static bases** within Cambodia.
- **Fight a guerrilla war** which the PAVN/Heng Samrin forces cannot effectively counter.
- **Maintain** a minimum of 80 per cent of trained armed units on operations **inside Cambodia** at all times.
- **Separate** civilian and military infrastructures.
- **Ensure** adequate and timely delivery of arms, ammunition and other essential supplies to guerrilla units inside Cambodia, by establishing a **major network of resupply routes and strategic caches**.

► 6. CONCLUSIONS:

As can be seen from the above, Hanoi's objectives in undertaking the 1984/85 dry season offensive were only partly achieved. At best, the results amounted to eradicating the embarrassment of the major population conglomerations along the Thailand-Cambodia border, creating further refugee problems for the Royal Thai Government, and launching construction of a border fence and a series of minefields. All of the latter hint at the fortress mentality of the Maginot Line, and may well prove to be just as ineffective in stopping resistance activity.

The offensive's major consequence has been that of forcing the non-Communist resistance to face the reality of their position, and accept that if they wish to combat the Vietnamese invasion of their country, they can only expect to achieve results by carrying out planned and well-executed guerrilla warfare. All the evidence during the past three months points to just such activity being carried out with a high degree of success, with many of the important lines of communication for the Vietnamese and Heng Samrin forces being regularly cut by guerrilla attacks. It remains to be seen whether the Hanoi leaders can come up with an operation to succeed 1984/85's K-5 and effectively combat an elusive guerrilla enemy.

II Report #5-9/85: Supply —PAVN'S growing problem

Vietnamese and Soviet military supplies reach PAVN/Heng Samrin forward locations by road, rail, river and air. All resupply methods have serious limitations, both natural and man-made, and present varied interdiction possibilities to CGDK forces. The Resistance are already exploiting some of these opportunities:

● **Road:**

During the dry season, a large quantity of military materiel is sent by road from Ho Chi Minh City in south Vietnam along Route 1 westwards into Cambodia through Svey Rieng and Prey Veng provinces to Phnom Penh. From there, it is forwarded along Route 5 to Battambang and Route 6 to Siem Reap, where the PAVN Forward HQ is located.

Frequent Khmer Rouge attacks on Routes 5 and 6 during 1985 have been successful in forcing the PAVN to use a rigid daylight convoy system, thus tying down large numbers of troops on static Vulnerable Point and Key Point protection duties at bridges and defiles. Non-Communist Resistance forces have been successful in ambushes mainly west of Battambang and Siem Reap, when military resupply is being moved to forward troop locations. The PAVN/Heng Samrin forces have proven singularly unable to counter effectively this hit-and-run warfare by the CGDK forces and reports have been received from defectors of growing frustration among middle-ranking officers at their lack of success. Moreover, CGDK guerrilla attacks along Routes 5 and 6 are eroding morale of ordinary PAVN/Heng Samrin soldiers, whose food and pay often suffer serious delays.

Late reports indicate increased activity by Khmer Rouge units deep inside Cambodia along Route 1 between Phnom Penh and the Vietnamese border. If such ambushes continue along this important stage of the Main Supply Route, the Vietnamese could be forced either to abandon Route 1 for resupply, pull back significant force levels from forward areas or call in reinforcements from Vietnam proper to guard the road.

● **River:**

By far the cheapest way for the Vietnamese to resupply their troops inside Cambodia is to use the Mekong River and the extensive inland waterways. Except in periods of major drought or serious flooding, this transportation method, unlike the increasingly delapidated roads, is not affected by weather. Moreover, waterborne transport does not require the same quantities of fuel or the infrastructure required for road upkeep and vehicle repair. Currently, major supply requirements are moved by boat up the Mekong from Vietnam to Phnom Penh, where they are transhipped to barges and smaller craft for forwarding northwest across Tonle Sap lake to Siem Reap, or north to Stung Treng along the Mekong itself.

To date, there has been very little attempt by CGDK forces to interdict these waterborne supply routes. This lack of activity has resulted from shortages of suitable equipment and accurate intelligence on supply movements and a consequent failure to evolve appropriate tactics. However, CGDK leaders, especially the KPLNF and ANS, are aware of this problem and are currently investigating various potential methods of operation. These will undoubtedly include the sabotage of Phnom Penh port itself and the mining of entrances to rivers, canals and unloading facilities. Viet Cong and PAVN units had some success in interdicting South Vietnamese waterways during the Vietnam war, particularly in the Delta area, and there is no major obstacle, other than equipment shortages, to CGDK forces carrying out similarly effective operations. Even limited CGDK successes will oblige the Vietnamese to use higher force levels and more sophisticated equipment to protect convoys, with the resultant effect on forward units' capability.

● **Sea/River:**

Kompong Som, on Cambodia's southwest coast, is the country's only deep-water port. In the years after Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, this port was used to offload the major supplies of food and medicines contributed to famine-threatened Cambodia by aid organizations. At the time, Soviet stevedores, part of the USSR aid package, helped relieve serious port congestion. As the famine threat receded, aid agencies in the main withdrew. However, Soviet officials and their stevedores remained, to continue port modernization, and Kompong Som is today under Soviet control to a significant degree. Vietnam ships some military supplies through Kompong Som and thence to Phnom Penh for onward distribution, but it is increasing Soviet use of the harbour which has given the port major geopolitical significance. For some time, Kompong Som has been the main entry port for Soviet materiel en route to Heng Samrin units or for direct delivery to Cambodia-based PAVN units. Helicopters, radar, ELINT and other sophisticated electronic equipment are unloaded from Soviet naval support vessels and merchant ships and sent along Routes 3 and 4 to Phnom Penh for onward distribution.

Resistance Interdiction Policies & PAVN Response. The Resistance are aware that it is essential to interdict supply routes as close as possible to the Cambodian port of entry. This realization has caused them to rethink their strategy of guerrilla operations. To interdict supplies, the Resistance require not only highly trained troops capable of undertaking long-range, deep-penetration operations. The CGDK also requires a sophisticated infrastructure of caches, intelligence agents and — most importantly — the neutrality or, ideally, active support of the civilian rural population.

One of the surest and more readily identifiable signs of a rise in civilian support for guerrilla activities is an increase in repression of civilians by a regime's conventional forces. Recent PAVN military activity east, northeast and south of Phnom Penh indicates that such repression is indeed being carried out, particularly along the main road and river/canal networks. This suggests that the Resistance are active in these areas and that a fair degree of civilian support is being received.

II Report #6-9/85: Resistance within Vietnam

Not only road, river and sea resupply routes are under Resistance attack. The railway line from Vietnam itself is also threatened. Apart from well-publicized Khmer Rouge attacks on rail transport inside Cambodia over the past three years, there has been considerable activity by Vietnamese resistance organizations inside Vietnam proper. In the forefront of this little-known war is FULRO (the United Front for the Liberation of the Oppressed Races). Based mainly in the Central Highlands, this longstanding movement finds its strength among the *montagnards*, the ethnically varied hilltribe groups who have been traditionally oppressed by the Vietnamese and who have found that life under Communist rule is no better — and, indeed, frequently worse — than that under old Saigon's corrupt governments.

FULRO contains among its ranks many seasoned soliders whose experience in guerrilla warfare goes back to the end of French rule over Indochina, when they received training and assistance from the French Army — in particular, Special Forces units. During the Vietnam War, these *montagnards* formed an integral part of the major and highly successful U.S. Special Forces operations in the Central Highlands.

For the past four years, the railway line from Hanoi to south Vietnam, the artery of military resupply, has been continually cut by FULRO units operating frequently with minimal and unsuitable equipment. On occasion, the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that Vietnamese railway authorities have refused to run trains on a 24-hour basis. FULRO guerrillas thus appear to have at least partial control over the terrain at night.

It is not yet clear what effect other Vietnamese resistance organisations are having on the rail supply route, but there has been little evidence of military action against the railways by them to date. There are, however, frequent defector reports about the extent of pilferage and destruction of supplies passing via south Vietnam to the PAVN in Cambodia.

But until Vietnamese and Cambodian resistance groups begin to rethink their tactics and improve their equipment and training, the railway remains a supply route which can be repaired quickly and often. The Resistance need training in effective bridge demolition and the supply of explosives needed to carry these out. While this remains a shortfall, a change in tactics could prove equally effective in the short term. If the resistance movements were to concentrate on sabotage and destruction of rolling stock and locomotives, the Vietnamese would be obliged to import replacements from the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. Resupply bottlenecks, long waits for new equipment and added burdens on the Soviet bloc's already large aid funding of Vietnam would result.

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CAMRANH WATCH

The former U.S. military base at Camranh Bay in south Vietnam is now the Soviet Union's major forward base outside mainland USSR. Its existence has significantly shifted the geopolitical and geomilitary balance in the Pacific Basin, at a time when many leading economic forecasters are describing the region as the world's next major economic growth area. Despite Vietnam's position as the third biggest recipient of Soviet military aid, Hanoi tried for some time to limit the Soviet presence at Camranh to a visiting and temporary basis. However, the pressing need for continual large military resupply to support operations in Cambodia and on the China-Vietnam border obliged Hanoi to bow to Soviet pressure to set up permanent facilities on and around the bay.

● CURRENT SOVIET AIR FORCE DEPLOYMENT AT CAMRANH

The Soviet Air Force (SAF) at present bases the following aircraft at Camranh:

- 16 X TU-16 BADGER, comprising
 - 10 strike a/c, armed with AS215 anti-ship cruise missiles
 - 2 air-refuelling tankers
- 6-8 X TU-95 BEAR long-range reconnaissance a/c, comprising
 - 3-4 BEAR Delta
 - 3-4 BEAR F
- 14 X MIG-23G

The SAF has established at Camranh refuelling storage facilities holding an estimated 5/6 million litres of aviation fuel. The Soviet have also constructed from 6 to 8 airconditioned buildings designed to store air-to-surface missiles. From 400 to 500 Soviet personnel, mostly specialist weapons and electronic systems technicians, staff the SAF base.

● CURRENT SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE AT CAMRANH

There are currently 16 Soviet naval vessels stationed semi-permanently at Camranh, using the repair, resupply and other facilities of the base's 6 deep-water piers. These vessels include minesweepers, 2 missile patrol boats, 3 ASW frigates, cruisers and 4/5 submarines (including both diesel — and nuclear-powered). The base is also regularly visited for replenishment by other Soviet naval vessels, including aircraft carriers on their way to or from the Indian Ocean Fleet. A large number of intelligence-gathering vessels also call at Camranh.

● SIGNIFICANCE OF SOVIET PRESENCE AT CAMRANH

The capabilities of aircraft and naval vessels operating from Camranh indicate the base's geopolitical and geomilitary significance. From Camranh, the Soviets can operate their aircraft throughout ASEAN in the strike role, and can carry out intelligence and surveillance patrolling as far as northern Australia. The effective operating ranges of the Camranh-based aircraft are as follows:

- MIG-23 operational radius
 - 750 miles
- TU-16 operational radius
 - 1,500 miles
- TU-95 operational radius
 - 3,921 miles

Electronic surveillance and vicinity patrols indicate a steadily growing level of naval activity. In January 1985, for example, there were never fewer than 20 Soviet naval vessels on patrol or passing through the area. At times, this figure rose to 30. As a whole, Camranh now provides the Soviet armed forces with the following capability:

- **Monitor** all U.S. military activity in the South China Sea.
- **Strike**, in the event of general hostilities, at the large U.S. military bases in the Philippines.
- **Threaten** China in the event of any major escalation of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict.
- **Speedily reinforce** the Soviet Indian Ocean Fleet (in any one month now, from 6 to 12 naval vessels).
- **Influence** regional crises.
- **Monitor** and, if necessary, **interfere** with shipping passing between the Pacific and Indian oceans, particularly tankers carrying Japanese oil from the Middle East.

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